

MENOMINEE NATION NEWS

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Special General Council Meeting looks at the Menominee Constitution and Bylaws



Marci Hawpetoss
Menominee Nation News

The Menominee Tribal Legislature held a special general council meeting on Saturday, September 17, 2005. This meeting gave tribal membership an opportunity to share their concerns regarding the Constitution and Bylaws of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin.

All nine (9) Menominee Tribal Legislators were in attendance. Legislator Gary Besaw started the meeting by offering a prayer in Menominee. The special general council meeting opened up for comments and suggestions regarding potential amendments to the Menominee Constitution and Bylaws.

See *General Council* on pg. 17

Menominee Youth Continue the Traditional Wild Rice Harvest



M. Hawpetoss/ Menominee Nation News

Menominee Tribal School students harvest wild rice on the Wolf River just outside of Neopit.

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The Menominee Tribal School (MTS), Menominee Indian High School (MIHS) and the Historic Preservation Department worked together in the spirit of collaboration, as they provided Menominee youth with an opportunity to honor “Pawahan Kesoq” or “wild rice harvest moon.”

MTS students were the first group of youth to participate. David “Nahwahquaw” Grignon began the wild rice harvest with a Menominee prayer, as he spoke of the name Menominee, pronounced “Omaeqnomenewuk,” meaning “people of the wild rice.” He then explained the creation story says “the Great Spirit gave the Menominee people two gifts: maple trees and wild rice fields.”

Nahwahquaw also talked about family camps, “Historically, Menominee families would set up camp near wild rice fields. During this time our land base was anywhere from nine to ten million acres. Young men had a very important role as ‘rice police’ in protecting the wild rice fields from birds.”

See *WILD RICE* pg.15

MTPD Golf Outing



R. Penass/Menominee Nation News

The Menominee Tribal Police Department held a golf outing fundraiser for the Shop with a Cop Program. Jerri and James O’Kimosh try to double their money by hitting the green. The MTPD golf outing was at Pine Hills golf course.



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General Council continued from pg 1

The first issue to surface was a Reservation-wide Zero Tolerance Policy on Drugs and Alcohol. Another regarded Freedom of Speech. The question of true representation initiated a suggestion for district formatting of the Tribal election process.

A question concerning the judicial system of the Tribe asked whether or not a judiciary committee is active. "If it is not, it could and should be" stated a tribal member. Some community members believe "there should be another avenue to file a grievance, besides the Supreme Court". Another concern for tribal members was Treaty Rights. It was said by a tribal member, "the United States Supreme Court upheld Menominee/US treaties and our hunting and fishing rights were never lost, not even through termination and restoration. Our legislature is making laws against our own treaties in regulating our hunting and fishing rights."

Suggestions were also made regarding the Menominee Tribal Enterprises: "As a sovereign nation, we have the opportunity to participate in free trade globally; China and Italy are looking for quality lumber- and the California fires put lumber in high demand, as well as Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana" stated a Tribal member.

The community member also pointed out Article XII Section 2 (b) of the Menominee Constitution regarding "Scope of Authority" which states "Tribal Legislature shall retain all authority and power to exercise all proper governmental and sovereign functions over the property managed or owned by Successor Business," as they expressed an interest in free trade.

A Menominee scholar brought forth a statement, as part of a study to be published in the American Indian Quarterly, Fall of 2006 which suggests the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin is "operating with an ancient constitution that does not take into consideration the population or changing times. The current constitution creates too much bureaucracy." He then stated he would like to see "spiritual leaders" managing government (i.e. traditional governance).

Tribal members also expressed their concerns with Tribal budget priorities and expressed an interest in participating in the budget process through more than one avenue. One tribal member stated "we should give priority in budgeting to youth, elders and cultural programs," while another tribal member added the "disabled."

The social experiment of termination was brought up, where a community member suggested "the Tribe make a statement about how disastrous termination was and how disastrous the social experimentation with social security might be for everyone."

Open gyms for the youth were suggested as means to keep youth off the streets and out of trouble. Another tribal member suggested we "build a mall with a grocery store, hardware store, pharmacy... because we are supporting Shawano businesses." Another member suggested the Tribe create a business committee.

An enrollment study on the Menominee Tribe conducted in 1994, University of Wisconsin Extension, was brought forward by a Tribal member. The study states that "by 2017 Menominee blood quantum will be seriously diminished." The community member then suggested the Tribe increase every member's blood quantum to slow this process.

Another community member stated, "enrollment does not belong in the constitution, it is a process of genocide." Clearly, both members expressed their concern about the future of the Menominee Nation.

A request for historical information on the Menominee Constitution and Bylaws was made by a Tribal member.

One legislator stated that "the current constitution, under the Indian Reorganization Act, was

voted on by less than 600 Tribal members.” Another legislator recommended to the governing body that “November be designated Menominee Constitution month.”

Requests were made for more time to review the Menominee Constitution and Bylaws and then reconvene the meeting within sixty days. It was also recommended that the Tribal legislature make the Menominee Constitution and Bylaws available to any tribal member who wishes to obtain a copy of the governing document in preparation for the next meeting.

The Menominee Tribal Legislature felt that this was a very important meeting. Suggestions included facilitating community education sessions on the Menominee Constitution and Bylaws, similar to those of the Forest Management Plan.

Written comments are being accepted until Oct 17, 2005 regarding this special general council meeting at the Chairman’s office. Please include a signature and enrollment number. Any updates regarding this meeting or the suggestions made will be published in Menominee Nation News, in addition to being posted in the community.

Review by the Legislature of comments will be published by November 22, 2005.

Wild Rice continued from front page

The MTS students began their harvest by offering tobacco, as they took their canoes into the calm waters of the Wolf River in Neopit. Nahwahquaw went on to explain “we need to treat the wild rice harvest ceremonially, we need to respect all living things.”

The youth guided themselves through the waters and into the wild rice fields. With three to each canoe, one person guided the canoe, one person held the wild rice stalks over the canoe and the other person gently hit the wild rice stalks with ricing sticks. MTS students successfully gathered wild rice.

Students from Menominee High School also participated in the wild rice harvest. Dave “Nahwahquaw” Grignon gave a Menominee prayer for the MIHS students. At that time he spoke of the historical significance of wild rice. He also recognized Mr. John Teller, Menominee Culture Teacher, for involving youth in the wild rice harvest.

As the MIHS students moved into the production process, they offered tobacco and gave thanks for the opportunity to harvest wild rice. The first step to processing wild rice is to let it dry.

After a week of drying, the MIHS Menominee Culture students came together to parch the wild rice. Wild rice was parched in a tin bucket, over a fire, as students took turns stirring the rice to keep it from burning.

MIHS students then proceeded to the next step, which is to dance on the wild rice. A hole was dug by the students, and a canvas lining was placed to keep the wild rice from the ground.

As the MIHS drum group, Young Chiefs, sang a variety of songs, students took turns dancing on the wild rice. This step allows the wild rice to loosen from the husks.

The final step is to winnow the wild rice. When the wild rice is winnowed the husks and other debris blow away, while the wild rice falls back into the birch bark basket. The students put the wild rice in a huge birch basket and tossed it into the air, catching all the good wild rice.

Mr. Teller stated “to culminate the events, we will have a wild rice feast in October where families of the students can join us in celebration of this traditional wild rice harvest.”

The Menominee people hold wild rice in high regards. In 1854, when the reservation was established, Chief Oshkosh asked that Menominees be able to harvest wild rice on Shawano Lake. This happened for a few years, until settlers began to fill the region.

In the future, the collaboration would like to take youth to harvest wild rice at Waupaca Lake, WI. It is hoped that someday Menominees will pursue their treaty rights off the reservation, in

addition to treaty rights within reservation boundaries.

Its humbling to see Menominee youth carrying our traditions with them into the future. As Nahwahquaw puts it, "it makes me feel good to see these young people harvesting, I know this tradition will continue."